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Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

The situation of women and girls in Afghanistan

Summary

Pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/9 of 27 July 2000, the present report provides an overview of the current situation of women and girls in Afghanistan against the background of the deteriorating socio-economic conditions, continued conflict and discriminatory edicts issued by the Taliban authorities. The report also contains information about actions taken by the United Nations system and assistance community in Afghanistan to improve the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan as recommended in the Economic and Social Council resolution. It also identifies areas in which further efforts are needed.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted in accordance with paragraph 14 of Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/9 on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-fifth session on progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

2. In the resolution, the Economic and Social Council expressed deep concern over the deteriorating economic and social conditions of women and girls in all areas of Afghanistan and condemned the continuing grave violations of their human rights. The Council encouraged the continuing efforts of the United Nations-assisted programmes in Afghanistan to promote the participation of women in those programmes and to ensure that women benefit equally with men from such programmes. In the resolution the Council also urged that all United Nations activities, including humanitarian assistance, be based on the principle of non-discrimination, incorporate a gender perspective, and actively attempt to promote the participation of both women and men, in conformity with the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan.

3. The resolution specifically referred to the Inter-Agency Gender Mission to Afghanistan conducted by the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women in November 1997 and appealed to all States and the international community to implement the recommendations contained in the report of the mission.[1]

4. The present report, which draws on a wide variety of sources, including organizations[2] of the United Nations system, provides background information (sect. II) and assesses the situation of women and girls in the present socio-economic context (sect. III). It also discusses (sect. IV) progress made by United Nations organizations in implementing the principle-centred approach to the gender issue contained in the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan and the report of the Inter-Agency Gender Mission.

II. Background information

5. The situation of women and girls during armed or other kinds of conflict is increasingly receiving international attention. The special session of the General Assembly on "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace in the twenty-first century", held from 5 to 9 June 2000, showed a growing appreciation, at the international, regional and national levels, of the different impacts conflict has on women and girls, including an increasing awareness of the need to address their rights and needs in the context of conflict. The special session also showed a clear understanding of the role of women in conflict prevention, peacekeeping, peace-building and post-conflict societal reconstruction and building on the critical areas, women and armed conflict, of the Beijing Platform for Action.

6. On 8 March 2000, the Security Council took a landmark decision to incorporate women and girls in all its deliberations, not just as victims of armed conflict, but also as constructive actors in finding peace. The Council affirmed the equal access to and full participation of women in power structures and underscored the importance of promoting an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes while addressing armed or other conflicts.[3] At its meeting on 7 April 2000 on the situation in Afghanistan, the Council focused on discriminatory policies against Afghan women, particularly in Taliban-controlled areas. In the statement by the President of the Security Council,[4] the Council condemned grave violations of the human rights of women and girls, including all forms of discrimination against them, particularly in areas under control by the Taliban. It called on all parties, in particular the Taliban, to take measures to end all violations of women's rights. During the debate, the Council requested the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women to respond to specific questions relating to gender issues.

7. At the meeting of the Security Council at which it considered "Women, peace and security", held on 24 and 25 October 2000, the Council further underlined the important role of women as equal partners with men in peacemaking and peace-building. The Security Council adopted resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000, which constitutes a new step forward to enhance women's role in peacemaking and peace operations.

8. Despite international pressure on Afghan parties to the conflict and measures taken by the United Nations and the international community in resolutions and statements of the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Commission on Human Rights and the

Commission on the Status of Women and despite the tireless efforts of the assistance community to improve the situation of Afghan women and girls, the overall situation has not shown significant improvement. Any discussion of factors relating to the situation of Afghan women and girls, requires an awareness of the complex mix of the conflict, the political situation, tribal and ethnic differences, gender relations and religion in Afghan society.

9. The armed conflict between the Taliban movement, which controls 95 per cent of the country, including its capital Kabul, and the United Front continued through the summer and fall of 2000. A significant characteristic of offensives in 1999 and 2000 was the deliberate targeting of civilians. Although the entire Afghan population suffers under armed conflict, women and girls are particularly affected. Afghan women have borne enormous hardships throughout the years of conflict. The population, including women and children have been bombed indiscriminately, deliberately targeted with violence and subjected to a wide range of human rights violations, as described in a series of reports provided by Mr. Kamal Hossain, Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights.[5] One study reports that more than 76 per cent of women's deaths during the war were due to aerial bombings.[6] According to another survey conducted by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in 1999, replies from Afghan respondents revealed that 83 per cent of the population had been forced to leave their homes due to the war, 53 per cent reported that a member of their immediate family had been killed during conflict, and 16 per cent reported knowing someone who was raped.[7]

10. Cultural norms and traditions in Afghanistan have been historically conservative and characterized by a strong division of gender roles where political, economic and social decision-making is largely determined by males. Control by the Taliban exacerbated the situation of women. Most members of the Taliban movement appear to hold the belief that the State should preserve the dignity and honour of families and guarantee the personal security of women. The combination of an ultraconservative interpretation of Islam with tribal patriarchal norms of conduct, and institutionalized gender discrimination had been reflected in a series of legislative acts (edicts) affecting women adversely.

11. Despite all the peacemaking efforts undertaken by the international community to end the fighting in 2000, described in four progress reports[8] of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan, developments in the country give little ground for optimism. An agreement of 2 November 2000, reached between the Taliban and the United Front, to enter into a process of dialogue under United Nations auspices, without preconditions in order to bring an end to the Afghan conflict by political means, provided a glimmer of hope. However, the recent decision by the Taliban to withdraw from the agreement in protest over the sanctions imposed by the Security Council in its resolution 1333 (2000) of 19 December 2000 gave further cause for concern.

III. The socio-economic situation

12. The people of Afghanistan continue to suffer from the accumulated effects of war and economic collapse. Recent reports have emphasized that the coping capacity of the civilian population has been severely weakened as a result of the war and the erosion of many traditional coping mechanisms including, in particular, the role of extended family networks.[9]

13. The country is also suffering from the worst drought in the region since 1971. The drought has led to increased malnutrition, large livestock losses, the loss of crops, a higher incidence of diseases, and an increase in the overall vulnerability of both rural and urban populations. Two consecutive years of natural emergencies, including droughts, floods and earthquakes, have left millions of people with little access to food. The country faces an acute food crisis in 2000-2001, with the cereal deficit exceeding 2.3 million tons, more than double that of 1999. The World Food Programme (WFP) Hunger Map, which identifies hunger hot spots, listed Afghanistan as one of the countries facing the greatest problems in 2001. It is estimated that nearly 4 million people are on the brink of starvation.

14. In terms of human development indicators, Afghanistan is ranked among the lowest in the world. It is, for example, estimated that one quarter of all children die before they reach the age of five. Literacy rates are approximately 35 per cent for the whole population,[10] but only 13 per cent for females in urban areas and 3 to 4 per cent in rural districts.[11] The

maternal mortality rates are the second highest in the world, with nearly 1,700 per 100,000 live births. Furthermore, only 12 per cent of women are estimated to have access to even the most basic health care, a situation that has changed little since the Inter-Agency Gender Mission in 1997.

15. The resumption of the conflict in the north-east during the past summer resulted in yet another massive forced displacement of the civilian population. Almost 130,000 people were displaced in 1999-2000. Large numbers of people have also left their homes due to the drought, in order to search for any available means of livelihood. Currently, some 40,000 people from the severely drought-affected and remote districts of Ghor, Badghis and Faryab provinces, now live in makeshift shelters in Herat, the main urban area in the west.

16. The situation of some 2.6 million Afghan refugees residing in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan has worsened, owing to both asylum fatigue and donor fatigue. Despite the harsh economic situation and the ongoing fighting in Afghanistan, many Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan have recently decided to return home because their predicament in those countries has become harder. At the end of last September, a total of 170,000 Afghan refugees returned voluntarily with the assistance of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the WFP and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). However, voluntary repatriation is a durable solution only for those who own productive assets or those who have the means to engage in the limited labour market.[12]

17. Afghanistan is one of the world's most mine-affected areas in the world. Land mines injure more than 8,000 people each year, including many women and children. It is estimated that over 700 square kilometres of the country are still contaminated by mines. During 1999-2000, the Mine Action Programme in Afghanistan, in close cooperation with United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other entities, cleared over 43.7 square kilometres of high-priority mined areas and 101.2 square kilometres of former battlefield in 20 provinces of Afghanistan. A further 51 square kilometres of mined areas and 103.8 square kilometres of former battlefield were surveyed and marked. Some 28,000 mines and 265,000 unexploded ordnance were destroyed during 1999, with a further 160,574 destroyed in 2000. The Mine Action Programme in Afghanistan also provided mine-awareness training to 332,396 civilians.[13] The severe shortfall of funding for the period September through December 2000 has, however, forced the programme to suspend its staff on two months' leave without pay and to freeze staff salaries and increments. As a further consequence, only 64 per cent of the sites targeted for clearance were completed in 2000.[14]

18. Because of the many years of fighting, almost all institutions of governance have been destroyed. Afghanistan does not have an effective government, constitution, rule of law or independent judiciary. The Islamic courts and religious police enforce Taliban's interpretation of Islamic law and punishment. Civil institutions are largely non-existent and policies and laws vary, depending on the region and the local commanders. Taliban's edicts are not evenly enforced throughout the areas under its control. For example, projects approved by local officials are not always endorsed by Kandahar officials and vice versa. Many educated Afghans who have had the option to leave the country have done so, either permanently or temporarily, as refugees or migrant labourers in other countries, contributing to a brain drain from Afghanistan.[15] The absence of a central government capable of developing policies and guidelines for the social and economic development of the country has had devastating effects on its population. The governance environment in Afghanistan today is defined by continuing war. As a result, virtually no domestic resources are marshalled for the purpose of organized relief, rehabilitation or reconstruction.[16] The annual budget, at $70.9 million, is equivalent to approximately 0.9 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). This means that Afghanistan allocates a smaller percentage of its national income to central government expenditure than any other country reporting in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) *Human Development Report*.[17]

A. Health

19. Following years of conflict, basic infrastructure, including health care, is left in a critical state. This has severely affected the health situation of women and children. The life expectancy for women is only 46 years.[18] Tuberculosis rates for women are among the highest in the world. There are approximately 133,000 cases, 70 per cent of which are females aged 15 to 45.

The drought has, furthermore, aggravated the situation as access to water has been considerably reduced. Water quality has deteriorated in many urban areas and the limited availability of drinking water in both urban and rural areas is now a critical health issue. It is estimated that less than one quarter of the population has access to clean water and that only 12 per cent have access to sanitation.[19] A curable disease such as diarrhoea alone kills an estimated 85,000 children each year. Moreover, most hospitals, health care centres and medical centres have largely been destroyed by war, and those remaining are mainly located in the urban centres. Currently, there is an average of only one physician for every 50,000 people in Afghanistan. Combined with the flight of trained personnel and the low capacity to produce new generations of doctors, nurses and health workers the current health care situation remains an area of deep concern to the international community.

20. The health situation of women and girls is further aggravated by the complete segregation in the provision of health services for males and females. This has enormously curtailed women's access to these services, especially when there is only a very small number of female doctors and trained nurses practising under severe restrictions in hospitals.[20] As noted above, basic health indicators reflect the alarming health situation of Afghan women and children, in particular regarding reproductive health where the maternal mortality rate is exceedingly high. An estimated 15,000 Afghan women die every year of pregnancy-related causes. According to WHO, only 12 per cent of deliveries in Afghanistan are attended by trained health workers, mostly traditional birth attendants. The fertility rate in Afghanistan is among the highest in the world, seven births per woman.[21]

21. Approximately 4 per cent of the Afghan population, or some 800,000 people, are disabled as a result of war, landmines, polio and poor basic health care in the country. A high rate of birth complications, for example, especially in undernourished women with inadequate medical care, gives rise to disabilities such as cerebral palsy. The Comprehensive Disabled Afghans Programme, together with several NGOs and the ICRC, has provided assistance and rehabilitation services to a large number of disabled people in Afghanistan. The humanitarian challenges involved in assisting the disabled remain enormous. Inadequate referral services mean that minor disabilities that could easily be prevented become complicated and irreversible. Furthermore, many disabled people, because of their lack of employment opportunities, become a socio-economic burden on their families and society.

22. From 1998 onwards there has been a clear, albeit slow, shift in the Taliban's position on the access of women to health services. There are, for example, indications of a relaxation of their ban on employment of females in the health sector. In 1999, approximately 40 female medical students, who were forced to leave Kabul University before receiving their medical degrees, were allowed to continue their education. In the first quarter of 2000, the authorities in Kandahar agreed, after lengthy negotiations with WFP, WHO and the Office of the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations, to start a nursing school in Kandahar for 50 female and 50 male nurses. A similar school for female nurses is being negotiated for Jalalabad. WHO also implemented two courses of continuing medical education for 48 female doctors, nurses and midwives in 1998-1999. Since 1998, increasing numbers of female nurses, vaccinators and traditional birth attendants are being trained by the assistance community and are currently working in both rural and urban areas. The nursing school in Herat was reopened during the first quarter of 2000 through assistance from WHO and WFP. Two of the larger women's hospitals — Meerawis Hospital in Kandahar and Rabia Balki hospital in Kabul — have also been rehabilitated jointly with the assistance community. Furthermore, as reported by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), female social mobilizers have played an important role in health education and enhancing awareness about safe water and sanitation, despite very arduous working conditions.

23. There has been a trend away from the centralized, vertical health care system towards a regionalized preventive and primary health care system that emphasizes curative medicine.[22] This change in approach can significantly benefit women and children, especially in a country where the supply base for curative medicine is very narrow for women. Measures have been taken, for example, in the area of reproductive health to reduce the high maternal mortality and morbidity rates in the country. UNICEF, WHO and NGOs, in collaboration with the Afghan Ministry of Health, have developed a Strategy

Framework for the Safe Motherhood Initiative with the objective of reducing maternal mortality and morbidity. The Safe Motherhood Initiative was launched in three provinces, Laghman and Logar in 1998, and Farah in 1999, and focuses on awareness raising and has capacity-building and training components. In 1999, the United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA), UNICEF, WHO and NGOs provided support to over 20 comprehensive obstetric care facilities to support traditional birth attendants and improve the maternal health programme. UNFPA has also developed emergency obstetric and reproductive health kits, which have been distributed in Afghanistan.[23] As reported by UNICEF and UNFPA, despite notable progress in sensitization, efforts in this field are hampered by the scarcity of implementing partners and qualified female staff as well as the various restrictions on the mobility of women.

24. Progress has been achieved in the area of immunization. UNICEF, WHO and a wide range of NGOs supported the National Immunization Days in May/June and in October/November 2000. During the spring round, approximately 5.3 million children under the age of five, both boys and girls, were vaccinated against polio, providing the highest coverage since 1994. UNICEF data show that there are no significant gender gaps in immunization coverage rates. This is largely a result of the participation of hundreds of Afghan female health staff in the various vaccination efforts, including the National Immunization Days. In spite of these measures, it is estimated that nearly 1,000 children died during the measles epidemic during the spring of 2000. These deaths could have been prevented if the children had been immunized or had had access to basic health services.

25. Recent reports have included information on the problem of the mental health of women in Afghanistan. Many women are traumatized by conflict and experience high levels of stress and anxiety in their daily lives. According to these reports, women, particularly in urban areas, display typical signs of trauma such as depression, anguish and chronic fatigue.[24] Severe depression has led some women to suicide. Furthermore, despite the lack of statistics on drug use among women, there is strong evidence that the number of drug-addicted females is increasing both in drug-producing provinces and other areas and in refugee camps. Women are using drugs as an alternative to medicine, but also for psychological reasons.[25] These reports indicate the importance of increasing efforts to address the mental and emotional effects of war.

B. Education

26. Women's equal access to education is key to improving the health, nutrition and education of the family as a whole, as well as to empowering women to participate more fully in the rehabilitation and development process. In Afghanistan, the education sector is characterized by limited human and financial resources, the absence of a national education policy and curricula at pre-university levels, and by the lack of resources and political will to rehabilitate school buildings and facilities destroyed by war. The situation of women and girls has been further aggravated by discriminatory policies that ban female students from all levels of education and that ban female teachers from working.

27. Education in Afghanistan today is provided to boys by religious and regular schools. In the Taliban-controlled areas, girls' access to education is available only through community and home-based schools established either by local communities or by the assistance community. Home- and community-based schools in both rural and urban areas function more as literacy centres than formal schools. The Badakhshan Province, controlled by the United Front, is currently the only location in the whole country where girls are studying up to the twelfth grade. NGOs such as the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, Save the Children-USA and Care International, provide the majority of education services, in coordination with UNICEF and WFP. The principled position of the United Nations system on equality of access of girls and boys to education has been the guiding principle in United Nations negotiations at all levels with the Taliban authorities. However, despite strenuous efforts led by UNICEF, no significant progress in improving girls' access to equality in formal education has yet been achieved.

28. In Islamabad in November 1999, the World Bank organized a workshop on education in Afghanistan which was attended by a wide spectrum of assistance actors. Participants concluded that even within the current restrictive environment, opportunities existed for expanding the education base for Afghan children.[26] However, medium- and longer-term investment in

human and financial resources is urgently needed to address the enormous problems faced by the education sector.

29. According to UNHCR data, only 30 per cent of primary school age children in the refugee camps are attending schools. Education in refugee camps is more formalized and girls of school age have more access to education at all levels. There are no gender gaps in the enrolment rates for children who are educated in urban centres in Pakistan.

30. In cooperation with international NGOs such as the Swedish Afghanistan Committee for Afghanistan, Save the Children-USA, Care International mentioned above and others, UNICEF and UNDP provide literacy skills and education to girls and have, as noted above, achieved some progress in the provision of alternatives to formal education in some Taliban-controlled areas. It is estimated that 300,000 children receive informal education. Moreover, community-based schools for girls are on the increase in urban areas. In November 1999, 9 community girls' schools were established in Kandahar Province and 13 girls' schools were established in Kabul; all of these were financed by local communities in agreement with the Taliban authorities. The number of privately organized home-based schools also increased in the urban areas. Furthermore, the British Broadcasting Corporation has developed an education programme through radio (BBC Reach) as an innovative attempt to increase access to education in the country.

31. The brain drain from Afghanistan, combined with the collapse of the education system, constitutes one of the great challenges for the future rehabilitation of the country.[27]

C. Employment

32. The war has destroyed the formal economic sectors in the country. According to the 1997 World Bank report, the Afghan economy is currently reliant on subsistence agriculture, unofficial transit trade, war-related financial flows, drug income and international assistance. For women, agriculture, animal husbandry and small home-based crafts such as carpet weaving, tailoring, embroidery, soap making, candle making, poultry raising, honey production and bakery activities have provided the only opportunities for employment. The United Nations and the assistance community have been involved in projects creating this type of employment to provide women and their families with a subsistence income.

33. However, these types of employment have only a limited impact on the status of women, as they require basic skills and are poorly paid. Women have no access to markets, due to the Taliban's imposed restriction on their movement. This leads in many cases to women's exploitation by male middlemen, except where NGOs take the responsibility for the final marketing of their products.[28]

34. During 1999 and the first quarter of 2000, the assistance community managed to increase the number of women in the area of health. Women are employed as doctors, midwives, social mobilizers and community mobilizers. A number of female teachers have also been employed at community-based schools for girls. These types of employment were facilitated by indications that the Mahram Edict, issued by the Taliban in March 1998, banning women from travelling inside Afghanistan without being accompanied by a male relative, was being relaxed.

35. A major setback to the achieved improvements in women's employment came on 6 July 2000 when the Taliban's Council of Ministers banned Afghan women from working in "foreign organizations and NGOs". The ensuing negotiations between the United Nations and the Taliban authorities did not bring about change in the Taliban's position. On 17 July, a *firman* (law) was signed by the Taliban leadership confirming the 6 July edict, while making exceptions for women working in the health sector. The July law was not only a gross violation of the rights of Afghan women to employment but it also significantly constrained the aid community's access to the contributions of Afghan women. For example, on 16 August, the Taliban authorities forced WFP to close its 24 women's bakeries in Kabul. The bakeries were run by 360 women workers providing subsidized bread to 7,200 families, comprising over 42,000 people, predominantly women and children. The women and children benefiting from the programme were amongst the poorest and most vulnerable people in Afghanistan.

36. Further complicating the difficulties faced by United Nations agencies was the issuance of a revised "Statute on the Activities of the United Nations in Afghanistan" of 14 August 2000. These measures indicated that the authorities felt a strong need to

exercise more monitoring and control over the assistance community's programmes, especially those where women were involved.

37. Reacting to the laws, the assistance community joined me in expressing deep concern regarding the ban against women's employment with the assistance community, which exacerbated the discrimination and suffering of Afghan women and children and constituted a gross violation of the rights of Afghan women. On 18 August, the Taliban authorities decided to reopen the women's bakeries in Kabul.

38. Lasting more than 20 years, the conflict in Afghanistan has created a large number of widows. Currently, there are about 2 million war widows living inside Afghanistan who are the sole providers for their families. The majority of these widows are unemployed, unskilled and live well below poverty levels. In 1999, the Taliban authorities issued an edict allowing needy widows with no other means of support to seek employment in the health and social service sectors. However, the opportunities in these sectors are extremely limited and many recent reports have noted an increase in impoverished women who are reduced to begging to help them survive.[29] The plight of widows who cannot support themselves because they are not permitted to work or benefit from humanitarian assistance is cause for particularly deep concern within the assistance community.

39. Unemployment rates are extremely high in Afghanistan and the need to create income-generating employment cannot be exaggerated. This applies to all parts of the country, but is especially severe in urban areas. The recent Taliban reorganization downsized the public sector by 40 per cent and worsened urban poverty. Unemployment in Kabul alone has reached serious proportions, with approximately one quarter of all families surviving on United Nations-subsidized bread and many others on remittances from abroad. Several central ministries have been downsized — the Ministry of Higher Education by 6,000 employees and the Ministry of Education by 12,000. Female teachers who were no longer allowed to work but were still on the payroll have now lost their incomes. According to a recent study of the Afghan labour markets conducted by the WFP, people's purchasing power is down in all major Afghan cities. The Taliban's edicts banning women from working and limiting the access of United Nations and NGOs to the inputs of Afghan women continue to present formidable obstacles to designing and implementing humanitarian programmes.

D. Women's human rights

40. The continuing reports from observers monitoring Afghanistan indicate the gravity of the human rights situation in general, but especially of women and girls, and the need for urgent international action. The Inter-Agency Gender Mission to Afghanistan in 1997 found that women in Afghanistan were unable to enjoy even the most basic rights under the 16 main articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to which Afghanistan is a signatory. Since then the situation has not improved. The Taliban authorities do not recognize the commitments made by previous Afghan regimes to the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights instruments.

41. The restrictions by the Taliban have severely affected women's civil and political rights, freedom of movement, and freedom of assembly, as Afghan women are confined to the home. The right to personal security has been violated as a result of the civil war, but also by the arbitrary and summary beatings of women by members of the Department for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice. There is, as expressed by the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women at a briefing for the Security Council on 7 April 2000, a need to continue to press for the full enjoyment of the rights of women and children, not only for education, health and employment, but in all other areas.

42. War still continues to be the most significant factor preventing the enjoyment of human rights in Afghanistan. The right of civilians to be treated as non-combatants continues to be ignored, resulting in significant loss of life and human suffering. Summary executions and arbitrary detentions are known features of the conflict and still continue.[30] The socio-economic conditions which are both an outcome of the war and a contributing factor to it, constitute the biggest threat to the lives of Afghan children, women and men.[31] In this respect, restrictions that hamper women's possibilities to sustain themselves and their families are of great concern.

43. Gender differences and inequalities in Afghanistan's patriarchal society are deep-rooted and multifaceted. During previous years of conflict, prior to the arrival of the Taliban, the rights of Afghan women were also largely ignored. The debate following the Taliban take-over in 1996 and the imposition of a number of edicts restricting the rights of both women and men in Afghanistan has led to an increased awareness about the need for the Afghan people fully to enjoy fundamental rights and freedoms.[32]

44. Aid organizations report that work in non-Taliban areas is not much easier despite the greater official openness of the authorities. The focus on the Taliban-controlled areas has also, as noted in the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of human rights with regard to women to the Commission on Human Rights Subcommission on Promotion and Protection of Human Rights,[33] led to a lack of reporting and information on the situation of women and girls in the territory controlled by the United Front. There is a need to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of the promotion and protection of the human rights of women and girls who reside in these areas and whose situation is rarely considered.

IV. United Nations activities in the context of the principled approach

A. Development of a gender policy and coordinating mechanisms

45. To respond to the continued restrictions on women's human rights in Afghanistan a set of policy recommendations for a principle-centred approach to these violations was developed by the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations in 1997. This approach was intended to enable continuation of life-sustaining assistance, that is, immediate survival and other humanitarian activities, while recognizing that selective disengagement of some United Nations agencies from some institutional assistance programmes may be required. The Inter-Agency Gender Mission translated these policy recommendations into practical operational guidelines and provided recommendations on their interpretation, taking into account the complex and quickly changing Afghan context. The policy recommendations and the findings of the Inter-Agency Gender Mission provided the basis for the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan established in 1998. The principles set forth in the Strategic Framework have since then guided the United Nations and its assistance partners in their activities.

46. Since coming to power, the Taliban authorities have regularly challenged United Nations principles. Particularly in mid-2000, the conditions under which assistance was provided to Afghans became more complex, in view of Taliban restrictions on women's employment and the new regulations limiting United Nations and NGO activities. In response, the United Nations has repeatedly made it clear to the authorities that discrimination on the basis of gender is unacceptable.

47. By applying the principled approach as far as possible combining gender equality, human rights and humanitarian aspects, during 1999 and the first half of 2000, the United Nations and the NGO assistance community have been able to bring about a number of positive developments in the areas of health, employment and education. This brought some hope for Afghan women's future, despite the bleak overall picture of the reality. This shift was also due to increased demand from local communities for health and education for girls and women and for income-generating employment for women, especially for war widows heading households. The United Nations and the assistance community have been instrumental in preparing the ground for this shift, through continued advocacy, principled engagement, and constructive dialogue and negotiation with the authorities.

48. The work of the Gender Adviser and the Human Rights Adviser, whose posts were recommended by the 1997 Gender Mission has been central in enhancing knowledge and awareness in this respect. They interact regularly with programme staff of United Nations agencies and NGOs and help to deepen understanding of how human rights and gender perspectives can be integrated in the programming process. They also helped to deepen understanding of the benefits of gender mainstreaming and empowering women, both among United Nations staff and Afghan officials and population. They provide valuable guidance to the NGO assistance community in their programme activities. Both gender equality and human rights action plans have been developed.

49. The necessary coordinating mechanisms of the aid community for gender mainstreaming and reaching out to Afghan women have been developed or

strengthened. Today, there are well-structured mechanisms such as thematic and working groups, including a Thematic Group on human rights, and Regional Coordinating Offices which facilitated the efforts of assistance actors to give concrete effect to the principle of non-discrimination. Furthermore, Regional Coordinating Bodies with the support of the Regional Coordinating Offices facilitate common programming initiatives at the regional level. With the assistance of the Regional Coordinating Offices, coordination arrangements are becoming more established and the limitations of access and capacity, constraints experienced through much of 1999, are being overcome. The Principled Common Programme for provision of assistance has, furthermore, facilitated the coordination of the activities of the United Nations and international and national NGOs. This programme addresses the priority needs required (a) to alleviate human suffering, (b) to protect and advance human rights, with special focus on women, (c) to provide minimum basic social services on a non-discriminatory basis, and (e) to ensure the return of refugees.

50. Reports from the field indicate that, by and large, there is no inherent gender discrimination in meeting the life-sustaining material needs of Afghans. The United Nations system in Afghanistan has furthermore established a number of monitoring mechanisms in order to review compliance with principles and guidelines, such as the Strategic Monitoring Unit, the weekly inter-agency senior staff meetings and the Gender Forum. Furthermore, the Memorandum of Understanding between the United Nations and the Taliban authorities established the Joint Consultative Committee to discuss United Nations standards on human rights and gender equality and the right to health, education and women's employment opportunities. The Joint Consultative Committee discussions have, however, not proved highly effective in solving policy and programming problems, in part owing to a low level of representation by the Taliban and frequent shifts in the Taliban's positions and organization. Further efforts are still required to strengthen mechanisms such as the Joint Consultative Committee and the Gender Forum.

B. Advocacy and dialogue on gender issues

51. The importance of developing and enhancing dialogue with the authorities and affected communities on priority gender concerns was identified as a key objective by the assistance community in 1999.[34] The United Nations has followed a policy of constructive engagement consistent with agreed principles. Dialogue with the Taliban and the United Front authorities on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with a special focus on the rights of women, is an ongoing process. Individual agencies are actively engaged in advocacy and dissemination of information at the local and central levels on issues such as the rights of the disabled, children and women. UNICEF has, for example, held successful negotiations with the clergy to convince them of the importance of the Safe Motherhood Initiative.

52. The field visits by the Gender Adviser and her regular meetings with Taliban political leaders and heads of technical departments have been very helpful in establishing contacts with the Afghan authorities. Following the July Edict, a number of field missions were undertaken to discuss the implications of the latest ban on women's employment. Furthermore, in 1999 and 2000, the Gender Adviser engaged the Taliban authorities in a discussion of the commonalties between the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Koran and other Islamic texts and practices.

53. The Secretary-General's Personal Representative as head of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan has, in his negotiations with the authorities, repeatedly raised the issue of gender discrimination and human rights violations. He has focused, in particular, on reports of the dismissal of female civil servants from government service, as well as broader gender equality issues.[35] A few women professionals are now also on the staff of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan. The former United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, on her mission to Afghanistan in October 2000 emphasized the issue of suppression of women's rights as a serious concern to the international community and a hindrance to the return of female refugees driven from the country by years of civil war.

54. Following the July Edict and the "Statute on the Activities of the United Nations in Afghanistan" a United Nations/NGO task force was established to

study the implications of the edict and to identify policy recommendations. The Task Force concluded that it was particularly important that the international community find a way to respond to humanitarian needs while simultaneously pursuing an approach that gives concrete effect to principles. It is equally important that the aid community take a proactive and collaborative approach and speak with one voice on issues of principle. The concluding comments of the Task Force were made available to the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs. The Executive Committee held two meetings, in New York on 7 November 2000 and at Geneva on 4 December 2000, discussing the implementation of the Secretary-General's June 1997 policy guidance on assistance to Afghanistan, especially with regard to the situation of women.

55. A wide range of NGOs, both national and international, as well as individual women and men, organized a series of advocacy campaigns expressing concerns about the denial of human rights of women and girls under the Taliban regime. In 2000, the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights received a total of 9,171 petitions from 36 countries representing all continents of the world.

C. Efforts to involve Afghan women in assistance programmes and improve their status

56. As a result of better coordination and programming many more rehabilitation programmes are targeting women now than in 1996-1997. Although under the Taliban's laws women and men cannot always undertake the same activities, wherever possible men's activities are complemented by parallel women's projects, ensuring equal benefits in participation and results.

57. In Kandahar, UNCHS (Habitat) engages men in solid-waste collection and women in a complementary sanitation education campaign. UNDP has developed the P.E.A.C.E programme (Poverty Eradication and Community Empowerment) which addresses poverty, food insecurity, lack of basic social and economic infrastructures, environmental devastation and governance problems. Women are specifically targeted in all aspects of the P.E.A.C.E programme and efforts continue among the United Nations agencies and NGOs implementing the UNDP-funded projects to engage more women. However, there is still a great deal of resistance, both cultural and political, to involving Afghan women at the different levels of the programme cycle. The P.E.A.C.E programme has shown that stable rural communities have more potential to demand services from the authorities, including girls' education than in the past.

58. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)/Afghanistan Rural Rehabilitation programme (ARRP) aims at fostering community participation, improving living conditions and human welfare for rural community members, in particular women, and promoting greater access to productive assets and income-earning opportunities. The programme is implemented through skills development and community-managed micro-credit schemes. Whenever possible, UNOPS/ARRP aims at organizing separate women's development committees, in an attempt to ensure that women are involved in planning and implementation of infrastructure projects. UNOPS/ARRP interventions under rural credit and income-generation activities have mostly targeted women.

59. Under its community development programme, Habitat is developing "Community Forums" across urban Afghanistan, emphasizing a participatory decision-making process. To date, out of 60 Forums, 24 are completely run and managed by women. It is planned that this number will increase. In addition, a variety of health and education activities are under way under the umbrella of these forums. On average these benefit more females than males.

60. FAO has also specifically addressed the needs of women, for example, through its livestock initiators programme. Activities within this programme have included the training of 302 women in different animal health and animal husbandry packages, and the provision of veterinary services to village women through four veterinary sub-clinics. A three-week refresher training course was held for livestock initiators in Peshawar. Assistance has focused on the development of livestock assets under the control of women through separate veterinary clinics with appropriate location for easy access by women. Participation in the training programmes was facilitated through culturally acceptable resource persons.

61. UNICEF has provided support to internally displaced persons that is specifically targeted to children and women. In Panjshir in 1999, UNICEF encouraged the involvement of female internally displaced persons in planning and implementation of projects. UNICEF staff have made regular field visits, insisting on meeting with women and visiting projects for girls and women, and have made relevant recommendations. UNICEF has also insisted that drought relief assistance reach women, girls and boys.

62. Under the umbrella of its parallel programmes Protracted Relief and Recovery Operations and Emergency Operation for Drought Victims, WFP's food assistance has reached a total of 2,650,122 of Afghanistan's most vulnerable people. Of this number, 826,838 are women and 1,060,048 are children, which represents 72 per cent of the total number of vulnerable beneficiaries reached by WFP. Women food aid monitors have carried out intensive monitoring of some of the WFP food assisted projects in urban areas in order to ensure that women and children have access to and benefit from WFP food supplies. Furthermore, to the extent possible, WFP seeks to build mother and child health clinics, girl's schools and maternity wards, which largely or exclusively benefit females. In July and November 2000, WFP organized two workshops for its gender focal points in order to elaborate on a strategy to reach more female beneficiaries.

63. A number of NGO projects have also, as mentioned above, specifically targeted female beneficiaries, through, for example, education projects, health information and income-generating activities, which provide an invaluable support and complement to the related United Nations efforts. The involvement of women in programme activities offered by the United Nations and the assistance community has been severely limited by the Taliban's restrictions on women's employment and mobility.

D. Awareness raising and promotion of women's human rights

64. United Nations agencies and NGOs conduct training courses on the rights of children, women and refugees. UNICEF has, for example, trained over 3,000 persons on the Convention on the Rights of the Child in six regions of Afghanistan, both Taliban and non-Taliban controlled, and supported awareness-raising activities on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Internal capacity-building on the rights-based approach to programming has also continued and additional gender training for staff is being planned. UNICEF plans to carry out training on children's and women's development issues for journalists and provide support to the only remaining television network in the country in Badakhshan. UNFPA, in cooperation with the BBC Afghan Education Project, contributes to the increased understanding of women's reproductive rights and dissemination of health information.

65. A comprehensive human rights training programme for aid workers covered by both the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, has been developed and launched in May 2000. Although the related funds have now been received, slow availability and disbursement of funds delayed the pace of the training. Additional resources will help to ensure that the current momentum is maintained.[36] The Gender Adviser has also initiated a series of gender training workshops for United Nations staff. Gender training workshops for UNDCP and WFP programming staff were, for example, implemented during June and July 1999.

66. The observation of special days, such as International Women's Day and International Day for Disabled Children have contributed greatly to raising awareness of women's human rights. On 8 March 2000, for the very first time during the Taliban rule, a formal public celebration of International Women's Day was held in Kabul. Seven hundred women of all ages, including former university professors, engineers, teachers, doctors, nurses and school principals attended the celebration. Ten of them were honoured with prizes from the organizers of the celebration, namely the United Nations system working in close collaboration with the Taliban authorities. A representative of the supreme leader of the Taliban, Mullah Mohammad Omar, made a statement at the celebration. Radio Shariah, the official Taliban radio station, covered the event and permission was granted to a wide cross-section of international media to attend the event and conduct random interviews with the women present. At the end of the celebration, it was announced that six women prisoners would be released in celebration of the Day.

E. Safety and mobility of staff

67. Security concerns continue to be a major cause of constraint in the provision of humanitarian assistance and in accessing Afghan women. The unstable political environment and ongoing conflict make delivery of assistance very difficult and sometimes dangerous. The murder of seven Afghan workers from the United Nations-supported mine awareness programme by an unidentified armed band in western Afghanistan earlier last year illustrates the everyday risks taken by humanitarian personnel.[37]

68. Moreover, in an environment where only female employees have access to Afghan women, the importance of the full removal of all restrictions on female employment and freedom of movement cannot be understated. The question of free and unhindered access for United Nations programmes and personnel to all populations in need, including the most vulnerable, such as female-headed households, the elderly, disabled individuals, children, marginalized groups and minorities, including refugees, has been one of the priority areas in discussions with the authorities during 1999-2000. All United Nations agencies strongly advocate the safety and mobility of female staff.

69. Although the supplementary protocol on security concluded with the Taliban in March 1999 still remains as the framework for ensuring that agencies are allowed to work effectively in full security, problems remain with its implementation. Following the July edict, minimal United Nations humanitarian operational requirements have been developed. Discussions are under way with the Taliban authorities to secure their agreement. Security of United Nations and NGO staff is held hostage to the general political environment, including the impact of possible outside interventions over which aid agency staff have no control, e.g., missile strikes, sanctions, etc. Security concerns are an inhibiting factor in terms of being able to maintain an adequate presence and ensure timely programme implementation.

F. Recruitment and placement of women

70. The rigid division of gender roles in Afghanistan creates a situation where access to Afghan women can be achieved only through female international and national staff. Employment of women by United Nations agencies is therefore a necessary prerequisite for the functioning of all programmes addressing the needs of the female population.

71. Although some agencies, such as WFP and UNICEF, have made strong efforts to improve the gender balance of both their international and national professional staff, the goal of 50/50 gender distribution was not achieved. Furthermore, all incumbents heading United Nations agencies in Afghanistan are still occupied by male professionals, as was the case in 1997.

G. Availability and distribution of resources

72. Funding is a fundamental constraint in meeting the humanitarian needs of Afghans, women as well as men. The assistance community has reported on the difficulties in finding sufficient resources to carry out its programmes. The Secretary-General noted in a recent report that the significant lack of resources often means that humanitarian agencies cannot respond to "brutal, life-threatening needs", and he appealed to donors "to respond generously to requests for support".[38] Of the $221 million requested at the beginning of 2000, donors have contributed $107 million, or 48 per cent.[39] Reports of diminishing international assistance due to donor fatigue are therefore alarming, e.g., for refugees, mine-clearance and drug programmes.

73. The assistance community has been providing Afghanistan with approximately $200 million annually in the last decade. Most of this assistance has been allocated to short-term humanitarian and emergency programmes. As a result, international assistance addresses human suffering and provides deterrents to major humanitarian disasters, but it does not allow for sustainable medium-term interventions that create an enabling environment for the rehabilitation of the country's social and production sectors, thereby improving the situation of women.[40]

H. Generation and dissemination of data and knowledge

74. There is a noticeable paucity of reporting and documentation regarding lessons learned and best practices at the programme level. There are few

surveys to assess project impact of programmes targeting women, for example, at the village, province or regional level. Furthermore, the monitoring and impact assessment components, if included at all in project proposals, are usually the weakest components of these proposals. UNICEF has pointed out that there is the need for an assessment of the gender aspects of the drought affecting the country. There is also a need for United Nations agency-specific training plans to strengthen the monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment competencies in programming, including gender-related monitoring and impact assessment competencies.

75. The establishment of an independent Strategic Monitoring Unit to provide indicators and baseline data against which to measure progress on issues of principle, including the assistance community's capacity to address the needs of the most vulnerable, is therefore a welcome development. Population figures have also been increasingly disaggregated in order more clearly to identify and target women and other vulnerable groups.[41] There is also increased coordination on public information and publications.

76. A revised set of gender mainstreaming indicators, based on the guidelines prepared by the 1997 Inter-Agency Gender Mission, is being prepared by the United Nations Gender Adviser and will be distributed at the end of January 2001 for review and approval by United Nations agencies. It is anticipated that this set of indicators will enhance the existing monitoring mechanism for follow up and evaluation.

V. Concluding remarks

77. With no peace in sight, and socio-economic conditions deteriorating — to the point where they are threatening the very survival of the Afghan people — particularly as a result of the drought, the collapsed health care and education systems and a lack of governance, Afghanistan is nearing a humanitarian disaster. Women are particularly vulnerable due to their social status in Afghan society, which historically has been characterized by conservative cultural norms and traditions and a strong division of gender roles. With the Taliban takeover of Kabul in 1996, gender discrimination became institutionalized by the authorities through the issuance of a number of edicts placing severe restrictions on women's freedom of movement, association and participation in public life. Women's access to education, health, employment and public life was severely curtailed. These edicts, in particular the Taliban's ban on employment of women, not only violate women's human rights but also present formidable obstacles for humanitarian efforts by the United Nations and the assistance community to improve the status of women and girls. Despite some intermittent changes, there has been no marked improvement in the overall situation of Afghan women since the visit of the Inter-Agency Gender Mission in 1997. In fact, it has worsened.

78. The overall situation of women, therefore, remains unacceptable and requires the sustained attention of the international community. As stated in the Afghanistan Appeal 2001, while the world has acknowledged the need for life-saving assistance, it seems unwilling to acknowledge Afghans' — and especially women's and girls' — dire need for health care, water, sanitation, education, productive employment and the realization of their human rights. Support is urgently needed for assistance programmes that not only sustain lives but also provide the hope of a future worth living.[42] There is a need for a medium-term involvement of the United Nations and the assistance community to facilitate capacity-building in local communities. Tangible progress in the advancement of women cannot be achieved through short-term, crisis deterrent programming. Moreover, not only is the current short-term financing not sufficient to meet Afghan women's needs, it does not allow for strategic planning or longer-term programming to address gender discrimination in the country.

79. The efforts of the United Nations and the aid community to improve programming, strengthen coordination and monitor mechanisms have contributed to some extent to the achievement of a principled approach on a more harmonious and united basis. All humanitarian actors increasingly realize the importance of involving Afghan women and girls in their programmes as a precondition for their success. A number of mechanisms are in place to link gender policy to concrete actions and a set of gender indicators is being developed. A monitoring mechanism has been set up to oversee compliance with the gender policy and gender strategy, in particular to identify inconsistencies between the gender policies of the agencies and the implementation of those policies in operational fieldwork. Agencies are better aware of

gender issues and are attuned to gender discrimination and human rights abuses. A number of innovative approaches have been adopted, including possibilities for women's employment offered through the Afghan extended family, complementing men's activities by parallel women's projects and the regionalization of women's projects. Agencies and NGOs are increasingly involved in advocacy with regard to gender equality problems. As a result, there is no gender discrimination in the provision by the United Nations of life-saving assistance to Afghan women and men. Moreover, some improvement in the status of Afghan women has been realized, in particular, in access to health and education. While not a holistic solution, this progress provides a basis for change. Yet much remains to be done.

80. The constraints related to incorporating international standards for the treatment of women and girls into the provision of international assistance to Afghanistan have yet to be addressed. Implementation of the principle-centred approach to gender equality issues in Afghanistan, consistent with the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan, continues to be hindered not only by the policies of the authorities, but also by differences within the aid community. One of the lessons learned is that a deeper understanding of Afghanistan and the cultural, social and economic context of the country should be the basis for gender-related interventions. Given flagrant disregard for women's human rights by the Afghan authorities in the context of extreme poverty and deprivation, United Nations agencies and the assistance community still face the challenge of achieving consensus on how to resolve the tensions between promoting gender equality and protecting human rights on the one hand, and saving lives by providing for basic human needs on the other. While widely accepted by the United Nations, the donor community and most NGOs, the pragmatic approach proposed by the Inter-Agency Mission in 1997, which holds that the right to life must be secured while simultaneously tackling the deep-rooted discrimination against women, is yet to be operationalized. In particular, the United Nations, NGOs and donors should collectively define a clear operational "bottom line" position to react to further flagrant violations which challenge international human rights and gender equality principles to the point where any further humanitarian cooperation would become impossible.

81. While clearly demonstrating its firm determination to uphold its principles, the United Nations makes efforts to expand dialogue with the Taliban and set the stage for potentially better communication with the authorities with the expressed goal of improving the situation of women and girls. Such continuing dialogue with the Afghan authorities, in which the international community speaks with one voice, is required to stress the urgent need to adhere to internationally accepted norms and standards. The Taliban, motivated by a strong desire for international recognition, is not insensitive to how it is perceived within Afghan society and by the outside world. The United Nations system and the assistance community should find ways and means to facilitate continuous dialogue on human rights and gender equality issues with the political and religious leaders within the Taliban movement. Furthermore, it is necessary to develop culture-sensitive programmes to sensitize Afghan officials, ministry staff and technical departments on international principles of human rights and gender equality.

82. The 1997 Inter-Agency Gender Mission to Afghanistan highlighted the critical role of women international staff in effective implementation of United Nations programmes since women staff provide vital and often unique links to the community in general, and to Afghan women and girls in particular. Despite efforts made by United Nations agencies to hire more women, the overall goal of 50/50 distribution of women and men staff set by the General Assembly has not been achieved. Efforts to employ more qualified women, especially at the decision-making level should be intensified. Security and limited mobility concerns continue to create major constraints for the provision of assistance. Without the full removal of all restrictions on the employment and freedom of movement of Afghan women, it will remain impossible to reach or even communicate with the thousands of women in extreme need of assistance.

83. Bringing the Afghan war to an end and averting an approaching humanitarian catastrophe will, without doubt, be the most important policy issues facing the international community. The quest for peace, development and gender equality in Afghanistan, which will be both long and difficult, requires a comprehensive strategy on the part of the international community to bring about a lasting solution. The Commission on the Status of Women may wish to keep

the issue of the status of Afghan women and girls under review in order to oversee the efforts by the United Nations and the assistance community to empower Afghan women, politically and economically, to contribute on an equal footing in peace-building and the rehabilitation of the country.

Notes

[1] Report of the United Nations Inter-Agency Gender Mission to Afghanistan, 12-24 November 1997 (see WomenWatch web site: www.un.org.womenwatch/news/archive.htm).

[2] Organizations of the United Nations system which provided their inputs for this report are as follows: FAO, WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNESCO, WFP, UNCHS (Habitat) and UNDP.

[3] Press Release SC/6816 of 8 March 2000.

[4] S/PRST/2000/12 statement by the President of the Security Council.

[5] See, for example, E/CN.4/1999/40 (March 1999), A/54/422 (September 1999), E/CN.4/2000/33 (January 2000), A/55/346 (August 2000).

[6] William Maley, "Women and Public Policy in Afghanistan: A comment", in *World Development 24*, No. 1, 1996:203-206.

[7] Referred to in the report of the Office of the United Nations Coordinator for Afghanistan, "Vulnerability and humanitarian implications of United Nations Security Council sanctions in Afghanistan", December 2000.

[8] See: A/54/791-S/2000/205 (10 March 2000), A/54/918-S/2000/581 (16 June 2000), A/55/393-S/2000/875 (18 September 2000), A/55/633-S/2000/1106 (20 November 2000).

[9] See, for example, the report of the Office of the United Nations Coordinator for Afghanistan, "Vulnerability and humanitarian implications of United Nations sanctions in Afghanistan", December 2000.

[10] See UNDP, *Human Development Report 2000*.

[11] See: Julie A. Mertus, *War's Offensive on Women: The Humanitarian Challenge in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan* (Kumarian Press, West Hartford, CT, 2000). "Afghanistan: Women survivors of war under the Taliban", by Judy A. Benjamin.

[12] Afghanistan 2001 United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal.

[13] Report of the Secretary-General on assistance in mine action, A/55/542, 3 November 2000, para. 59.

[14] Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, A/55/633-S/2000/1106, para. 68.

[15] *Afghanistan Outlook* report of the Office of the United Nations Resident Humanitarian Coordinator for Afghanistan, April 1999.

[16] UNDP, report prepared by Paula R. Newburg, "Principles, capacity-building, and gender in Afghanistan" (1 May 1998).

[17] See report of the Office of the United Nations Coordinator for Afghanistan, "Vulnerability and humanitarian .... ".

[18] See *The World's Women 2000: Trends and Statistics* (ST/ESA/STAT/SER.K/WWW/16).

[19] Afghanistan 2001 United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal.

[20] Report prepared by the United Nations Gender Adviser in Afghanistan, "Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan", September 2000.

[21] See *The World's Women 2000*.

[22] See note 20.

[23] UNFPA, *The State of World Population 2000: Lives Together, Worlds Apart: Men and Women in a Time of Change*.

[24] See for example: report by Physicians for Human Rights, "The Taliban's war on women: a health and human rights crisis in Afghanistan" 1998, and report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, mission to Pakistan and Afghanistan, 1-13 September 1999 (E/CN.4/2000/68/Add.4), para. 27.

[25] See note 20.

[26] The United Nations Gender Adviser in Afghanistan, "The situation of women's health, education and income-generating employment in Afghanistan: a gender perspective", report prepared for Afghanistan Support Group Meeting, Ottawa, 8-9 December 1999.

[27] Report of the Secretary-General, "Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan", A/55/348, 31 August 2000, para. 83.

[28] See note 20.

[29] Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, A/54/791-S/2000/205, 10 March 2000, para. 45.

[30] Afghanistan 2001 United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal.

[31] Afghanistan Support Group Meeting, Stockholm, 21-22 June 1999, background paper prepared by the United Nations Coordinator's Office.

[32] See, for example, *War's Offensive on Women*, "Afghanistan".

[33] Report of the Secretary-General on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, E/CN.4/Sub.2/2000/18, para. 51.

[34] Afghanistan 2000 United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal, Mid-Term Review.

[35] Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, A/54/918-S/2000/581, 16 June 2000, para. 7.

[36] See note 34.

[37] Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, A/55/393-S/2000/875, 18 September 2000, para. 9.

[38] Ibid., paras. 38 and 52.

[39] See note 30.

[40] See note 20.

[41] Afghanistan Support Group Meeting, Ottawa 8-9 December 1999, background paper prepared by the United Nations Coordinator's Office on Principled Common Programming.

[42] See note 30.